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TWO SERMONS:

THE FIRST,

PREACHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 30,

THE SECOND,

PREACHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1812:

BEING DAYS OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION, AND PRAYER;

APPOINTED BY

PUBLIC AUTHORITY.

BY JAMES ABERCROMBIE, D. D.

SENIOR ASSISTANT MINISTER OF CHRIST-CHURCH, ST. PETER'S, AND
ST. JAMES'S.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY NOSES THOMAS, NO. 52, CHESNUT-STREET,

J. Maxwell, Printer.

1812.

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District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE it remembered, that on the eighth day of September, in the thirty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1812. Moses Thomas, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following to wit:

“Two Sermons: The first preached on Thursday, July 30; the second preached on Thursday, August 20; 1812: being days of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, appointed by public authority. By James Abererombie, D. D. Senior Assistant Minister of Christ-church, St. Peter’s and St. James’s.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to the Act, entitled “An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled “an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the District of Pennsylvania.

PREFACE.

IT is with extreme reluctance that I commit the following Sermons to the press. Being hastily written, without the least idea of future publication, they are not sufficiently polished to meet uncensured the severe and scrutinizing eye of classical criticism: and, being now given to the world, in *vindication* of myself against the false and malicious aspersions of a widely circulating daily Gazette, I am not at liberty to make any alteration or amendment. Under circumstances of such restriction, I trust I shall experience the indulgence of the reader. They are given exactly as delivered from the pulpit, without suppression or addition; and the original manuscripts are left with the printer, for the inspection of any who may doubt my assertion.

The Democratic Press, of August 27th, says, "If the *sedition* sermon Dr. Abercrombie preached last Thursday, was intended as a signal, a tocsin for *another St. Bartholomew's*, be all the innocent blood on the heads of the aggressors. The republicans are quiet, but not tame." And, in the same paper, an extract from the United States Gazette, of the 20th June, 1798, is thus introduced; "We are particularly moved to the publication of this extract, inasmuch as the *last Fast Day Sermon of Parson Abercrombie*, to say nothing of our New England clergymen, seems to call for some admonition at this juncture of our affairs." In the pa-

per of August 29th, after proposing to reprint as “ *Legendary Tales, Poems, and Works of Fancy,*” the declarations *upon oath* of the gentlemen who were sufferers in the late Baltimore Riot, the editor says, “ to make the proposed work useful in disseminating sound orthodox doctrines, in Religion as well as Politics, the publisher intends to enrich its pages with some of the choicest and most sedition-stirring passages in the

FAST DAY SERMON

of the

REVEREND MR. ABERCROMBIE.

‘The’ volume shall be printed on a super *Royal* paper, with a new *Scots* type, and bound in *Calf*.” In the next number of his paper he dedicates “ An address to the people of England,” said by him, to be written by W. Cobbett, “ to Parson Abererombie and the rest of the *Spaniel Tribe,*” &c. &c.

A public charge of *seditious* intention, and a consequent threat of personal injury, though founded upon false and assumed premises, requires, at the present moment of agitation and party rage, some attention; and is best refuted and repelled, by submitting the alleged cause to the candour of the public. That no sedition was intended by me, or can be found in my Sermon, I can with truth assert. The political sentiments are predicated upon general principles, which every well informed and honest politician must acknowledge to be just. But if doctrines are silently suffered to be perverted, and scriptural authorities misapplied, *that* silence implies an acquiescence in the misrepresentation: and no

clergyman is safe in the discharge of his professional duty, or unassailable by the arrows of calumny, or the frantic fury of a mob.

That a clergyman must have, and as a member of the community hath a right to express, his sentiments on Political subjects, will surely not be denied; though the Pulpit, except, upon political occasions, is, of all others, the most improper place for their introduction. In the very few instances in which I have suggested any thing of that nature in a sermon, I have *always* afterwards submitted it to the inspection of the public through the medium of the press. Had I not been restrained by a sense of propriety on the present occasion, I should probably have spoken more fully and explicitly on the awful and alarming situation of our country, occasioned indeed more by internal and silent, than by open and external danger. The nations of the Eastern Continent have, for many years, been terrified, and many of them have been subdued, by a ferocious and unprincipled Tyrant, who has been permitted, as the scourge of Heaven, to sweep with the besom of destruction, the territories of the surrounding nations; and to subvert, with the iron sceptre of Despotism, the tranquillity and happiness of the Kingdoms, Republics, and Empires, which for ages had enjoyed the protection and nourishment of "their own vines and their own fig trees, while there was none to make them afraid."* From the remoteness of *our* situation, *we* have not much to fear from the *external* violence of this menacing Meteor: yet, its pestiferous and paralyzing influence may infect

* Mic. 4.

with its deleterious poison our surrounding atmosphere; and produce, though in a different form, the same fatal and destructive consequences. *We* have yet been permitted, by the mercy of Heaven, to escape the fangs of his unbounded ambition, and to elude the gigantic grasp of a Monster, whose nervous arm is the sceptre of death—whose smile is the pledge of destruction—and whose fraternal embrace is the earnest of instantaneous annihilation—of the most abject slavery—or, of protracted and lingering dissolution. Such severe discipline is sometimes mercifully, yet wisely, administered by a superintending Providence to the children of men.

“It is the language of all the Scriptures,” says the late eloquent and learned Lord Bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. Horsley, “that God governs the world according to his will; by which we must understand, a will perfectly independent and unbiassed by any thing external; yet not an arbitrary will, but a will directed by the governing perfections of the Divine Intellect—by God’s own goodness and wisdom: and, as justice is included in the idea of goodness, it must be a will governed by God’s justice. But God’s justice, in its present dispensations, is a justice accommodated to our probationary state, a justice which, making the ultimate happiness of those who shall finally be brought by the probationary discipline to love and fear God, its end, regards the sum total and ultimate issues of things—not the comparative deserts of men at the present moment. To us, therefore, who see the present moment only, the government of the world will appear upon many occasions not conformable, in our judgments,

formed upon limited and narrow views of things, to the maxims of distributive justice. We see power and prosperity not at all proportioned to merit, for “the Most High who ruleth in the kingdom of men, giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”—men base by the turpitude of their wicked lives, more than by the obscurity of their original condition; while good Kings are divested of their hereditary dominions, dethroned and murdered: inso-much, that if power and prosperity were sure marks of the favour of God for those by whom they are possessed, the observation of the poet, impious as it seems, would too often be verified.

“The conqueror is Heaven’s favourite; but on earth,
“Just men approve and honour more the vanquish’d.”*

“As at this moment the world beholds with wonder and dismay, the low born usurper of a great monarch’s throne, raised by the hand of Providence, unquestionably, to an eminence of power and grandeur, enjoyed by none since the subversion of the Roman empire—a man whose undaunted spirit and success in enterprise, might throw a lustre over the meanest birth, while the profligacy of his private, and the crimes of his public life, would disgrace the noblest. When we see the Imperial Diadem circling this monster’s brows,—while we confess the hand of God in his elevation, let us not be tempted to conclude from this, or other similar examples, that he who ruleth in the kingdom of men delights in such characters, or that he is indifferent to the virtues and vices of men. It is not for his own sake that such a man is raised from the dunghill on which he sprang, but for

* *Victrix causa Diis placuit; sed victa Catoni.*

the good of God's faithful servants, who are the objects of his constant care and love, even at the time that they are suffering under the tyrant's cruelty: for who can doubt that the seven brethren and their mother were the objects of God's love, and their persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes of his hate? But such persons are raised up, and permitted to indulge their ferocious passions, their ambition, their cruelty, and their revenge, as the instruments of God's judgments for the reformation of his people; and when that purpose is answered, vengeance is executed upon them for their own crimes. Thus it was with Nebuchadnezzar, and with that more ancient persecutor Sennacherib, and many more; and so we trust it shall be with him who now "smiteth the people in his wrath and ruleth the nations in his anger." When the nations of Europe shall break off their sins by righteousness, the Corsican shall be persecuted with the fury of our avenging God, and none shall hinder." "It has been the will of God to set up over the kingdom" the basest of men," in order to chastise the profaneness, the irreligion, the lukewarmness, the profligacy, the turbulent, seditious spirit of the times; and when this purpose is effected, and the wrath of God appeased, 'wherein is this man to be accounted of, whose breath is in his nostrils?'"*

Our danger, however, from our local situation, does not arise so much from the physical or military strength, as from the insidious conduct of this Colossal Conqueror, who "stands on the continent of Europe, like a political Upas, surrounded by the prostrate remains of

* Horsley; Serm. vol. 2. p. 232 and 236.

its credulous governments. Wherever its branching arms extend, reign the silence of despair and the apathy of slavery; while nations yet to be ravaged look on with indifference, under the fatal illusion, that the rank and miphitic blasts of oppression and tyranny, like those of the poisonous vegetable, shed their baneful venom only within a definite circle; each vainly imagining, until too late, that they are removed from the danger of its influence, by some peculiar local or moral cause.*

Should an alliance be formed by *our* rulers with this tremendous power, “we shall be covered,” to adopt the energetic language of that accomplished scholar and eloquent writer, Mr. Walsh—“with a double load of opprobrium, as we are the only nation of the globe, that will have arranged itself on the side of France, without unavoidable necessity, or without having first undergone a struggle with that power. The security which circumstances had given us, from her desolating sword, will be the seal of our condemnation. It will be our ignominious sentence, in the judgment of our contemporaries, and at the bar of history, that when, to our eternal honour, we might, at very little risk, have stood forth after England, as the second and only bulwark of civilisation and justice,†

* Walsh’s Rev. for July, 1812. p. 135.

† The Rev. E. Parish, D. D. of Byfield in Massachusetts, in his new system of Modern Geography, speaking of the political importance of France, thus eloquently expresses himself. “France has but one rival in her political influence; she seems to direct the destiny of empires. Her conquests have been extensive; the splendour of her victories has astonished the world,

we exchanged this illustrious character, for that of a subordinate, and the only voluntary confederate, in the monstrous scheme pursued by her enemy, to brutalize and enslave the human race.”*

The destructive and unnecessary war in which a blundering and feeble Administration hath involved us, will of all other possible events be most likely to induce, under the plea of necessity and the mask of patriotism, this worst of all evils, this sure precipitation into the gulf of national perdition.

Such being the imminent, the awful danger, which threatens my country, being thus compelled to come before the public, 'tis from the impulse of duty, and, I trust, of genuine patriotism, that I avail myself of the opportunity to raise my warning voice, and candidly to express in the *Preface* those sentiments which would have been unsuitable to the nature of the composition, or the sacredness of the place in which the following Sermons were delivered.

I have published my Sermon, preached on the first Fast day (July 30, 1812,) lest the *sedition* said to be in the last, not being found there, should be transferred to the first. I trust none will be found by the candid reader in either—“ Qui capit, ille facit.”

Philadelphia, September 7th, 1812.

and awed the rulers of nations. Secured by surrounding hills the British Monarchy alone, like Noah from the mountain of Ararat, looks down on the universal Deluge of ruin.” p. 186.

* Walsh's Review, No. 7. p. 74.

SERMONS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

CHRIST-CHURCH AND ST. JAMES'S,

PHILADELPHIA,

ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1812,

APPOINTED BY CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY,

AS A DAY

OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION, AND PRAYER,

THROUGHOUT THE

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

BY JAMES ABERCROMBIE, D. D.

SENIOR ASSISTANT MINISTER OF CHRIST-CHURCH, ST. PETER'S, AND
ST. JAMES'S

Journal of the

Proceedings of the

General Assembly of the

Year 1847

Printed by

A SERMON, &c.

3 Chron. vii. 14.

If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

OMNIPOTENCE, Omniscience, and Omnipresence are properties universally acknowledged to be essential to the nature of Deity, and are therefore justly ascribed by us to the God whom we profess to worship.

The possession of these attributes necessarily implies an observance of the conduct, and a consequent approbation or disapprobation of all his rational creatures. And as we, as such, are endowed with the faculty of freewill, and have not only the law or will of God written upon our hearts, and operating by the agency of conscience, or the moral sense, but have the clearer and more explicit revelations of the old and new covenants to guide our feet into the paths of rectitude and peace, we cannot but believe, that this Almighty Being will reward or punish us according as our conduct quadrates with, or is opposed to, his divine will. This retributive punishment or blessing was, under the first or old covenant, experienced by the occurrence of *worldly* prosperity or adversity: and though under the new, as the sphere of our knowledge is increased and extended

into the invisible or spiritual world, that retributive reward or punishment is to be ultimately and fully expected by us in a future state, yet the dictates of reason as well as the assurances of revelation teach us, that this life is still a probationary state; and that its events are directed by a superintending Providence, to call into operation the Christian virtues, and thereby to qualify us for admission into the kingdom of Heaven: nay, so minute and vigilant is our celestial Protector and Guide declared to be, that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without his knowledge and permission.* Hence arise the important doctrines of a general and particular Providence, the former relating to the destinies of nations and empires, the latter to those of individuals.

A confidence in this theory of the Divine Government hath induced the assembling of ourselves together this day, to deprecate the divine displeasure, and thereby to avert, by penitence and prayer, the difficulties and distresses we are already involved in, and the infinitely more dreadful calamities which lie before us in prospect.

In the remainder of this discourse, therefore, I shall,

1st. Briefly advocate the doctrine delivered,

2dly. Comment in order upon the requisitions in my text, as resulting from the doctrine delivered; and,

3dly. Apply its operation to our present national circumstances.

“It is impossible,” said a wise and virtuous Heathen,† “for a rational being to look up to the heavens, and contemplate the magnificence and splendour of the firmament, and the rich variety of provision which the

* Matt. x. 29.

† Cicero.

earth affords for the comfort and accommodation of man, without acknowledging that there must be a God.”

And, that the Almighty Being who created not only this earth, but the immense and immeasurable universe; continues to uphold and preserve it, is equally evident. His wisdom and goodness are amply displayed towards mankind, as well in the wonderful mechanism and construction of their bodies, as in having communicated to them refined intellectual powers, by which they can reason, reflect, judge, and regulate their actions; in the rich variety of gifts which incontrovertibly testify his having designed them for happiness; in his daily preservation of them; in the capacity he hath given them, of enjoying the pleasures of social and domestic life; in delivering them from, or comforting them under affliction; in offering to forgive their sins; in granting to them instruction and assistance to obtain eternal life; in inspiring them with the hope of immortality; in the gracious dispensation of the Christian religion, to cherish and confirm that hope; in the limited period of man's probationary state; and in the sure and precious promises he hath extended to him.

Under such circumstances, can' we for a moment doubt the superintending care of God? and, if individuals are thus induced to acquiesce in his dispensations, and improve them to their spiritual benefit, surely the conduct of nations, or large associations of individuals, must be in a superior degree objects of his parental attention and care: and, as the imbecility of our intellectual powers prevents us from judging accurately of the cause and ultimate tendency of events, we must

conclude, that they are wisely ordered for our benefit; either, if adverse, to punish our omissions of duty, or commissions of sin, and thereby induce repentance and reformation; or, as trials of our faith and voluntary obedience.

Such are some of the leading suggestions of Reason with respect to the providence of God, and they are all abundantly enlarged and confirmed by the assurances of Divine Revelation—by Patriarchs and Prophets—by Christ and his Apostles. “I,” saith God, by his Prophet Isaiah, “I form light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things. Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker. I have made the earth, and created man upon it. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”*

“Behold,” saith God, by his prophet Jeremiah, “as the clay in the potter’s hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will withhold the punishment with which I thought to visit them.”†

“Wisdom and might,” saith Daniel, “are his, and he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings. The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will; and” sometimes “setteth up over it the basest of men.”‡

“The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up: the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up.”§

* Is. 45.

† Jer. 18.

‡ Dan. 2. and 4.

§ 1 Sam. 2.

“He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them,” saith holy Job, “he enlargeth the nations and straighteneth them again.”*

“The kingdom,” saith David, “is the Lord’s, and he is the Governor among the Nations.”†

“Behold,” said Christ, “the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they?”‡

“God is faithful,” saith St. Paul, “who will not suffer you to be tempted (or tried) above that ye are able; (to bear) but will with the temptation (or trial) also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”§

Many other passages of similar import might be added, did time permit—let these suffice to show the general tenor of Holy Writ upon this interesting subject.

I proceed now, 2dly, to comment in order upon the requisitions in my text, as resulting from the doctrine delivered.

King Solomon having finished the building of that magnificent temple, which he had erected for the worship of the most High God, and having solemnly dedicated it by prayer and sacrifices to that sacred purpose, the Lord testified his divine approbation of his labours by sending down fire from Heaven, which consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and a cloud of glory filled the house, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place

* Job. 12.

† Ps. xxii.

‡ Mat. 6.

§ 1 Cor. 10.

to myself for a place of sacrifice. If I shut up Heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence" (or war) "among my people; if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

"If my people who are called by my name shall *humble* themselves."—

Pride, ambition, vanity, and self conceit, are turbulent and debasing passions, which render us blind to our spiritual weaknesses and wants, and agitate and deform the mind of man in such a manner, as to render it an unholy and unfit receptacle for the divine influence, or Spirit of God; and therefore we are told by the voice of inspiration, "into a malicious or haughty soul, Wisdom (or Religion) will not enter, nor dwell in the body which is subject unto sin; for the Holy Spirit will flee deceits, and remove from thoughts which have no understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in."† "The pride of thine heart," said God by his prophet Obadiah, to Edom; "the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee."‡ "Pride," saith Solomon, was not made for man, and "why are earth and ashes proud?"§ "God," saith St. James, "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."|| "Humble yourselves," saith St. Peter, "under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."¶ It was an enjoined part of the religious discipline of the Jews, to express their humility by sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Before therefore we presume to approach our Maker in

* 2 Chron. 7.

† Wis. i. 4.

‡ Ob. 3.

§ Eccl. 10. and 18.

|| Jam. 4.

¶ 1 Pet.

the character of suppliants, we should contrast our littleness and vileness with his purity and greatness, and humble ourselves before him.

“If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and *pray*”—After a just conviction of our wants and unworthiness, and being clothed with humility, we are permitted to address our Almighty Creator, and to pray unto him.” “Before thou prayest,” says Solomon, “prepare thyself.”* “Arise and call upon thy God.”† “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.‡ “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much with God.”§

“Prayer ardent opens Heaven, lets down a stream

“Of Glory on the consecrated hour

“Of man, in audience with the Deity.” YOUNG.

“If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and *seek my face*.” This expression in scripture language is synonymous with praying. “Seek ye my face,” saith God; “Thy face,” said David, “Lord will I seek.”|| “The name of God is on them for good that seek his face.”¶ We must seek the Lord before he will be found. We must come, as it were into his presence, and fall low on our knees before his footstool, when, we pray unto him.

The next requisition is “*to turn from their wicked ways*.”—Acknowledgment of error, petition for pardon, and supplication for grace, though enjoined duties, would be but a mockery of God, unless our repentance be accompanied by reformation.

“Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord

* Ecclus 18.

† Phil.

||P. S. 27.

‡ Jonah, 6.

§ Jam. 5.

¶ Ez. 8.

and he will then have mercy on him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.”*

“ If the wicked will turn from all his sins, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”†

When John the Baptist saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees (the ostentatious and empty professors of religion) come to his baptism, he called upon them to attest their sincerity by corresponding conduct: “Bring forth, said he, *fruits* meet for (or indicative of) repentance.”‡ “ By their *fruits*,” said Christ “ shall ye know my disciples.”§ St. Paul told king Agrippa, that his instructions to the Jews of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles were, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.||

On the observance of these requisitions, *viz.* contrition, prayer or supplication, sincere repentance, and actual reformation, the mercy and favour of God, are promised to sinful, depraved, rebellious man: and, on no other. Awful, and alarming declaration!

“ If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will *heal their land*.”

I proceed now to the third proposed head of my discourse, *viz.* To apply the text, and the doctrine delivered from it, to our present national circumstances. “ I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will *heal their land*.”

* Is. lv.

† Mat. iii.

|| Acts xxvi.

‡ Ez. xviii.

§ Mat. vii.

“When thy judgments, O Lord,” saith the evangelical Isaiah, “are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness:”* for therefore are they sent. And a more general, awful, and impressive call to repentance and reformation hath never before been heard by the world, than that which now exists; and which, like the voice of the trumpet on Sinai’s trembling mount, at the time of the promulgation of the law, hath “sounded long, and waxed louder and louder,”† by the extension and accumulation of national calamities throughout the civilized portion of the globe.

War, famine, pestilence, volcanoes, earthquakes in divers places, and every possible convulsion of nature and of human society hath terrified and distracted the nations of the old world.

Brethren, *we* have not fully experienced the miseries I have depicted. Let the prayer, the penitence, and the ardour of our devotions this day, endeavour to avert the threatened desolation. Let us humble ourselves, and pray, and seek the Lord, and turn from our wicked ways, that he may heal and protect our land; that he may heal our internal divisions, and make us as a band of brothers, of one mind and of one heart, in seeking the Lord, and in acting with wisdom, moderation, and integrity. The rod of his anger is held over us in terror, but he hath hitherto forborne to strike. We are indeed unexpectedly involved in a declaration of war against a powerful nation, with which there exist the natural bonds of amity, which arise from a similarity of language, customs, manners, religion, laws, and, as far as the circum-

* Is. xxvi.

† Ex. xix.

stances of our infant country would permit, a form of government.

A discussion, however, of the principles or motives which have led to this declaration of war is foreign to this place. Our duty as Christians and fellow citizens is, to lament its occurrence, and implore the aversion of its calamities; to lament that this once prosperous and happy country is now distracted by internal divisions—her Commerce, the strongest nerve of her prosperity, withered by internal restrictions, and external violence—and many of her most active and industrious citizens consequently reduced, with their families, to penury and to want. Surely these are diseases of our land, which none but the Almighty's hand can heal. Let therefore each individual consider his responsibility as such to pray, to consider his ways, to repent, to reform—to pray that our rulers may be directed by celestial wisdom to order our affairs so as yet to avoid the horrors of war.

“As war,” says that illustrious moralist, Dr. Samuel Johnson, “is the last and most desperate of remedies, all lawful expedients should be used to avoid it. *As war is the extremity of national evil, it is surely the duty of those whose station intrusts them with the care of nations to avert it from their charge.* There are diseases of animal nature which nothing but amputation can remove, so there may, by the depravation of human passions, be sometimes a gangrene in collective life, for which fire and the sword are the necessary remedies: but, in what can skill or caution be better shown, than in preventing such dreadful operations, while there is yet room for gentler methods?”*

* Falkland Islands.

And, in order that we may perform our part, let us most fervently avail ourselves of the present appointment, to endeavour by penitence, prayer, and reformation, to appease the wrath of Heaven, and avert the evils which threaten to overwhelm us—To this end, let us again supplicate the mercy of our God.

Eternal and ever blessed God, by whom all things were made, and by whom they are upheld, mercifully look down from the throne of thy glory upon the unworthy creatures who are now bowing at thy footstool. Give us grace to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand. Take away from us, we beseech thee, all hardness of heart. Cause us seriously to reflect on the misery of war, and to obey that awful voice which now calleth us to supplication and repentance. Sanctify to us the solemn situation into which our sinful passions have brought us, that we may not only call upon thy holy name, but put away the evils which provoke thy just displeasure.

O merciful God, though we be chastised, let us not be forsaken by thee. Give wisdom, give integrity, give true patriotism, we beseech thee, to those who manage our public affairs; that they may discern and adopt the best measures that can be pursued at this time of public danger and distress.

We confess, O Lord, that we are a wicked and rebellious people, notwithstanding the manifold and repeated mercies thou hast vouchsafed to us. Thou hast shown us wonderful things in thy goodness, O God of our salvation, and hast hitherto protected us from open violence. Thou hast continued to us the light of thy glo-

rious gospel—the benefits of thy Word and Sacraments, and hast blessed us with liberty, safety, and plenty, whilst so many of our brethren abroad are persecuted and enslaved: and, whilst other countries have groaned under the miseries and calamities of tyranny, bloodshed, and ruin, thou hast given us fruitful seasons, and many other great and invaluable blessings; and for many years hast preserved us from pestilence, from famine, from civil and intestine wars—and when thou hast corrected us, it has been like a kind and tender Father, in mercy and gentleness, letting us see, that not our ruin, but our amendment, was intended thereby.

O! merciful God, hear us, pardon us, and restore to us the blessings of peace and prosperity, for the sake, and through the merits and intercession of thy blessed Son, our Saviour and Redeemer. **AMEN** and **AMEN**.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

ST. JAMES'S CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA,

ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1812,

THE DAY APPOINTED

BY THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

“FOR THE DEVOUT PURPOSES OF RENDERING TO THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE, AND THE BENEFACTOR OF MANKIND, THE PUBLIC HOMAGE DUE TO HIS HOLY ATTRIBUTES.”—PROCLAMATION.

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A SERMON, &c.

Hosca xiii. 9.

O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.

SUCH was the remonstrative address of God, by his holy prophet, to his chosen people Israel, often designated in this book under the term Ephraim: a part being, by a customary figure of speech, put for the whole, in these, as is in many other passages of the sacred writings.

The circumstances recorded, which induced this affectionate expostulation, are very remarkable; and deserve our particular attention.

The tribe of Ephraim, one of the most numerous, and consequently most powerful of the twelve, and with whom the tabernacle of God had, for many years, been lodged at Shiloh—who also in journeying through the wilderness toward the land of Canaan, had, together with the Manassites and Benjamites, been privileged with encamping immediately behind the tabernacle and the ark, so that God was said by the Royal Psalmist to “lead Joseph,” (Ephraim and Manasseh being his two sons) “like a flock,” and to show himself particularly and perpetually to these tribes, in the Shechinah, or glory, the symbol of the divine presence, which hovered over the mercy seat, between the two golden cherubim, who, with their expanded wings, covered it above—This favoured portion of Israel, and as it would appear from

the text, the Israelites in general, had been seduced into a familiar intercourse with the idolatrous king of Assyria, and trafficked in his land, by which means they gradually relinquished the worship of the true God, and became the worshippers of his idols—notwithstanding which, he afterwards treacherously marched a powerful army into their land, took and ravaged the fenced cities, murdering the inhabitants in the most inhuman and merciless manner. Hence the complaint and lamentation of the prophet—“Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind; he daily increaseth lies and desolation, and doth make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.” And hence, the complaint of God by the same prophet: “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” “Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.” “The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid.” “He hath ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity, and eaten the fruit of lies—Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled: the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion, as a leopard by the way will I observe them, I will meet them as a bear that is robbed of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lion, the wild beast shall tear them”—And then follow the words of my text. “O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help. O Israel return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” This the prophet afterwards predicts shall be done. “Ephraim shall yet say,

What have I any more to do with idols?" And he thus concludes his book: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things, prudent and he shall know them."*

The psalm which I referred to in the preceding narration is the 80th, and begins thus:

"Hear, O thou Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep; show thyself also, thou that sittest between the Cherubim. Before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasses stir up thy strength and come and help us. Turn us again, O God, show the light of thy countenance and we shall be whole. O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink. Thou hast made us a very strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn. Turn us again, O God of Hosts, show the light of thy countenance and we shall be whole."

That the infinite wisdom and power of Almighty God, direct and control the destinies of nations is an incontrovertible truth, dictated by reason and confirmed by Divine Revelation: attested also by the recording pen of the historian through the long lapse of succeeding ages, since the first association of mankind under the restraints of government and law. The turbulent passions, the vicious propensities, the wants, the weaknesses, and the wickedness of men, compel them to seek for safety and for comfort from the salutary organization of civilized society; and the same principles, inflamed by luxury, and stimulated into vigorous exer-

tion by the flattering suggestions of ambition, avarice, or pride, are rendered the powerful agents of the corruption, decay, and dissolution of that very compact which, for a time, constituted the source of public as well as of individual happiness. Every thing terrestrial, whether immediately formed by the creating hand of Deity, or resulting from the reason and ingenuity of man, is stamped with the signet of Fate; and, touched by the Talisman of Time, becomes resolved into its original principles. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” was the fiat of the Almighty Creator, even against man, whom he had constituted the head, the Lord, or Governour of this lower world. “The body,” says Solomon, “shall return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”*

This, though ultimately certain to all, is effected in a variety of modes, and at different periods of existence; and may be retarded or accelerated by attending to, or rejecting, the suggestions of wisdom and virtue.

With respect to Communities, their dissolution and destruction generally arise, from the weakness or wickedness of the Rulers, or the ignorance and profligacy of the People. “Wo unto thee, O Land!” says Solomon, “whose king,” (or chief magistrate) “is a child.”†

The high responsibility which the administration of a government involves, requires, as indispensable qualifications, both in the Legislative and Executive branches, not only sufficient *Wisdom* to know what is best calculated to promote the interest of the community, but the most incorruptible *Fidelity* to choose and

* Eccl. xii. 7. † Eccles. x. 16.

pursue that course of conduct; and when both or either of these essential principles is wanting, the interests of the nation must suffer and decline; and it will eventually fall a sacrifice, either to internal dissensions and civil war, or to the flattery or corruption of some jealous or ambitious rival Power, who grasps at its dominion; and through the imbecility or treachery of its Rulers, will often accomplish the desired object by secret and invisible means, before the people can be sufficiently awakened to see their danger, or prevent, by timely exertions, the destruction which threatens them. A sound and vigorous constitution may be undermined as effectually, by a wasting, yet flattering and gradual decay, as by the frantic delirium of a fever, or the convulsive agonies of apoplexy. The mischief and misery which open force or outrageous violence could not effect, have often been as certainly accomplished under the guise of friendship, and the insidious delusions of pretended patriotism. And such calamitous events are permitted by Providence to occur, as a punishment to that nation or people for their general defection in religious or moral duties, or an insensible disregard or ungrateful enjoyment of the blessings it may have pleased God to shower down upon them. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.”

Innumerable are the examples, both in sacred and civil history, of the destruction of cities and countries, in consequence of the wickedness of their inhabitants.

“Hear, O Israel,” said God by Moses, “thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and

fenced up to Heaven. But, not for *thy* righteousness, or for the uprightness of *thine* heart dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”*

Had *ten* righteous persons been found in Sodom and the cities of the plain, they would not have been destroyed; and many are the threatenings recorded in Holy Writ against iniquitous nations to overthrow them, “like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and his wrath:” of whom saith Moses, should it be asked, “wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what *meaneth* the heat of this great anger? men shall say because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them.”†

“Seek ye the Lord,” saith God, by his prophet Zephaniah. “Seek righteousness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger, for Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Wo unto the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the nation of the Cherethites, the word of the Lord is against you: O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have

* Deu. 9.

† Deu. 29.

reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. And I will stretch out my hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.*

“The most High,” saith the prophet Daniel, “ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and” (sometimes) “setteth up over it the basest of men.”†

“At what instant,” saith God, by his prophet Jeremiah “I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it. If that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.”‡

“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”§

“If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”||

* Zep. 2.

‡ Jer 18.

|| 2 Chron. 7.

† Dan. 4.

§ Jer. 18.

“ Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

“ When thy judgments, O Lord,” saith Isaiah, “ are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”†

Repentance and reformation are the sure and declared modes of appeasing the wrath of Heaven, and conciliating the favour of the Deity. And as the virtue and piety of individuals promote and constitute the security and happiness of the community, so under the infliction of national difficulty or distress, the correction of the errors which induced it, must commence in the reformation of individuals. Let each member of *our* great political family, therefore, hold up to his mental eye the mirror of Conscience, and strictly mark his omissions of duty, and commissions of sin, whether of a civil, domestic, or religious nature, and he will soon see how highly instrumental *his* conduct must have been in occasioning the difficulty or distress inflicted. The influence of individual character in retarding or promoting the public weal, has been felt and acknowledged by all reflecting minds in every age: and in all civilized societies, the institution of days of public humiliation and prayer, are intended to produce that general and beneficial effect. Let us therefore justly improve the appointment by which we are now assembled in this Holy Temple; and let us retire from this house of prayer, determined to search and try our ways, to review our past lives, and reform not only whatever has been amiss in the temper and disposition of our minds,

* Prov. 14.

† Isa. 26.

but in whatever has been deficient and erroneous in our conduct as *professing Christians*, as *members of a political or civil association*, as *heads of families* or sustaining any of the important relations of domestic life. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in *me* is thy help.”

I would ask every individual in this assembly, have you as a *professing Christian* strenuously and sedulously endeavoured to walk worthy of that high and blessed vocation wherewith you are called? Have you been a Christian in deed and in truth, or have you only made a mockery of Christ, by calling yourself his disciple, without obeying his precepts, or availing yourself of the aid he has offered to conduct you to his Heavenly Kingdom? Have you regularly observed the public worship of God; and when in his Holy Temple devoutly joined in the public service, thereby inducing others by the powerful influence of your example to perform their duty, “to worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker?” Have you partaken of those instituted channels of divine grace, his Holy Sacraments, particularly that of the Lord’s Supper, to which you are so earnestly called and bidden by Christ himself, and his Ministering Servants? Have you diligently read and meditated upon the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testaments, mercifully given to you as the charter of your eternal salvation—the guide which is granted to conduct you, by the path of holiness, through this wilderness of sin, to the regions of Celestial Happiness, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Paradise of God? Have you by private and daily devotion implored the forgiveness and the favour of Almighty God, together with the influence of his Blessed Spirit, to restrain your pas-

sions, to purify your hearts, to direct your wishes and desires, to set your affections on things above, on the seraphic enjoyments of the Heavenly Jerusalem?

As a member of a *political and civil association*, have you been obedient to the laws? Have you, according to the Constitution of our government, and agreeably to the privileges communicated by it, as a good citizen, without regard to personal or party considerations, endeavoured, according to the sphere of your influence, to place in the important station of Rulers, men of wisdom, integrity, firmness, magnanimity, and disinterested attachment to the public welfare; the dignity, the honour and prosperity of the nation? and if that honourable and responsible station has been held by men incompetent to, or unfaithful in the discharge of its duties, have you with equal alacrity and zeal, endeavoured, by all lawful means, to remove them from their elevated station, of which they may thus have proved themselves unworthy, and to place in their stead men of superior talents and superior virtue? Have you exhibited yourself as a useful and ornamental member of society by unwearied diligence in the exercise of your profession or calling, by prudence and justice in your dealings with others, by temperance, mildness and urbanity in your deportment, by exercising the rites of hospitality with promptness and generosity to your friends and acquaintance, and even to strangers “Use hospitality,” says St. Peter, “one towards another without grudging,”* and, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for, thereby some have entertained angels unawares,” says St. Paul to the Hebrews.† Have you willingly assisted in re-

* 1 Pet. 4.

† Heb. 13.

lieving the wants of your suffering brethren, and according to your ability given to him that needed? Have you forgiven others their trespasses against you as freely and fully, as you hope forgiveness from your Father who is in Heaven? In short, have you regulated all your thoughts, words, and actions by the golden rule of doing to others, as, under an exchange of circumstances, you would wish them to do unto you?

As the *head of a family*, or sustaining *any* of the important relations of domestic life, have you acted with kindness and affability towards your equals, with respect and due submission to your superiors, and with mildness and affectionate condescension to your inferiors. As a *parent*, have you instructed your children by salutary example as well as by precept? Have you instilled into their young and yielding minds, the principles of religion, and the precepts of wisdom and virtue? Have you prayed *with* them as well as *for* them, that they may grow in grace and in favour with God and man as they grow in age? As a *child*, have you honoured and obeyed your parents with affectionate and grateful attention? As a *master*, have you behaved with gentleness towards your servants, “knowing that you also have a master in Heaven?” Have you endeavoured to mitigate and sooth the hard condition of servitude by every reasonable indulgence, and have you uniformly avoided all harshness, imperiousness, or severity of deportment towards them? As a *servant*, have you been diligent, sober, and honest in your calling, “not purloining, not answering again, but showing all good fidelity.”*

If in any of these characters in which Providence may have called upon you to act, you have violated *any* of the duties I have enumerated, you have done *your* part in promoting the corruption of morals, in provoking the displeasure of Almighty God, and in inducing the calamities or evils which have fallen upon our country. Be it your part, therefore, to repair by repentance and immediate reformation, the mischief and misery you have occasioned by your folly and your sin.

“ O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.”

We, brethren, as rational beings, are consequently free agents; but, from the original corruption of our nature, by the disobedience of our first progenitors, the natural propensities of the human heart are to evil; to preserve us from the influence of which, or recover us from its dominion, after we have submitted to it, the infinite mercy of the Deity induced him to provide a remedy; to offer such spiritual aid and protection, as, if applied for and sought through the channels which he hath appointed, will enable us to resist evil, to recover our last dignity, to conciliate the favour of Almighty God, and finally to obtain perfect and eternal felicity in Heaven. But, if we neglect the use of those means, we cannot obtain the blessed effects produced by them, and by them *alone*. If, therefore, we fall through the deceitfulness of sin, we fall wilfully, our destruction is of ourselves. “ O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” This help, however, terminates with time; for “ there can be no repentance in the grave.” God, we are assured, willeth not the death or final destruction of a sinner, but

that all should be saved. He hath called to us by his *Prophets*; he remonstrates with us by his *Priests*; he instructs us by his *Providence*; and by his *Holy Scriptures*, which he hath caused “to be written for our learning;” he allures us by the mission, the promises, the miracles, the atonement, the perpetual intercession of his *only Son*, to turn from our evil ways, and live—to “look unto him and be saved;” he hath offered us the celestial succour and support of the *Holy Ghost, the Comforter*, to purify our hearts, and prepare us for a future intercourse with saints and angels, with the blessed inhabitants of Heaven.

“What could he have done more for his vineyard that he hath not done in it?” “Our sufficiency,” therefore “is of God.” Our salvation is of the Lord, and cannot fail to save those who embrace it.

With life and death, eternal felicity, or unutterable misery thus set before us, “why will we die?” Why do we not all avail ourselves of the infallible means which God has provided for our escape from the thralldom of sin, and the inevitable destruction which must follow? Let every individual consider these solemn truths, and apply these important questions to himself; and let the consciousness of his errors induce sincere repentance and immediate reformation; that he may thereby not only save his own soul in the last great day of account, but be a powerful agent in averting from our afflicted country the misery under which she *now* groans, and the desolation and destruction which threaten so speedily to overwhelm her.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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